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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of resolution 1770 (2007), adopted on 10 August 2007, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the first submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the last report (S/2007/330) of 5 June 2007, with a focus on initial steps taken to implement resolution 1770 (2007). It presents a summary of key political developments during the period under review and the efforts of the Government of Iraq to promote national reconciliation, as well as regional and international developments pertaining to Iraq. The report provides an update on the activities of my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, an assessment of the security situation and an update on operational and security matters.

II. Summary of key political developments in Iraq

A. Key activities of the Council of Representatives and the Government

3. The administration of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Council of Representatives continues to operate under extremely challenging circumstances. Against a backdrop of daily attacks, continued high levels of displacement and political gridlock, there have been some positive signs. During the month of September, the level of Iraqi casualties decreased significantly, the Prime Minister consolidated a four-way alliance with the major Shiite and Kurdish parties in Parliament and discussions continued on legislation that is central to the process of national reconciliation.

4. During the reporting period, the work of the Council of Representatives and the Government of Iraq was hampered by regular political boycotts and the five-week summer recess by the Council of Representatives. On 13 June, Sadrist members of the Council of Representatives suspended their participation in

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Parliament over delays in the reconstruction of the Samarra shrine destroyed in February 2006. They resumed attendance on 17 July when the Prime Minister's Office and the Council of Representatives proposed plans for the reconstruction of the Samarra shrine. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is coordinating the rehabilitation of the shrine with financial contributions from the Government of Iraq and the European Commission, and the first phase of the project is set to begin shortly.

5. The members of the Council of Representatives affiliated with the Tawafoq bloc suspended their participation in the Parliament on 23 June over a controversy relating to the Council Speaker, Mahmoud Mashhadani, who is a member of Tawafoq. The Speaker had been accused of involvement in the attempted assassination of Council member Mithal al-Alussi in which his two sons were killed. The 44 members of Tawafoq returned on 19 July following an agreement reached with other voting blocs to reinstate the Speaker.

6. On 29 June, the Tawafoq bloc suspended participation of its Cabinet ministers to protest the arrest of the Minister of Culture, Muhammad Abdallah al-Hashemi, in connection with the same assassination attempt of member of the Council of Representatives al-Alussi. Subsequently, on 25 July, Tawafoq broadened its demands to include the release of detainees and the removal of militia members currently serving in the security forces. All six ministers from the bloc, including Deputy Prime Minister Salam al-Zobaie, resigned on 1 August as their demands were not met. Minister of Planning Ali Baban subsequently resumed his duties on 12 September and resigned one week later from both the Iraqi Islamic Party and Tawafoq in order to focus on his ministerial responsibilities as an independent member of the Cabinet. On 5 August, the Iraqiya List withdrew its five representatives from cabinet meetings claiming that Prime Minister al-Maliki had failed to respond to demands for political reform made five months earlier.

7. The 40-member Cabinet has now lost 16 ministers and ministers of State. Eight of the 29 Ministers currently serving are not attending cabinet meetings. The Prime Minister has accepted only the Sadrists' resignations, thereby leaving the status of the remaining ministers uncertain. Other ministers appear to be continuing their duties despite their resignations.

8. Following these departures, on 16 August Prime Minister al-Maliki announced the formation of an alliance consisting of his Government's remaining political parties, including the predominantly Shiite parties of Dawa and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party. On 15 September, the movement of Moqtada al-Sadr announced its withdrawal from the United Iraqi Alliance, the majority bloc in Parliament. As a result the Alliance lost 32 of its 113 seats.

9. The Council of Representatives passed a non-binding resolution on 5 June obligating the Cabinet to request Parliament's approval on future extensions of the mandate governing the multinational force in Iraq and to include a timetable for the departure of the force from Iraq. The Sadr bloc collected 144 signatures of members of Parliament from various blocs to set a timetable for the withdrawal of the multinational force, but there was insufficient support to pass the measure as a law.

10. On 3 July, the Council of Ministers approved the draft Hydrocarbon Framework Law with 24 of the 40 Cabinet members present. Concerns over the

draft law were registered by all sides in Parliament and the draft law continues to be discussed by political leaders. The Kurdistan National Assembly passed the Kurdistan Region Oil and Gas Law, and the Law entered into force upon the approval of Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani on 9 August.

11. Following a series of high-level consultations, Prime Minister al-Maliki, President Jalal Talabani, Vice Presidents Adil Abdul Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashemi and Kurdistan Region President Barzani announced on 26 August an agreement on a series of legislative initiatives intended to overcome obstacles to the Iraqi political process. The leaders agreed to replace the current De-Baathification Law with the Law on the Higher National Commission for Accountability and Justice and approved the draft Law on Governorates which are not part of a region. Both pieces of legislation are before Parliament for discussion.

12. The Council of Representatives reconvened on 4 September after a five-week summer recess, but no major pieces of legislation have been debated or passed since. At the request of the Chairman of the Constitutional Review Committee on 8 September, the Council of Representatives extended the formal timeline for the submission of the Committee's final report to the end of December 2007.

13. Kirkuk remains a sensitive issue that requires the development of a mutually acceptable way forward as the 31 December 2007 deadline for a referendum on the status of Kirkuk approaches. The Commission for the Implementation of Article 140 relating to Kirkuk and other disputed territories met on 13 August after a five-month break under its new Chairman Raid Fahmi, the Minister of Science and Technology, and member of the Iraqiya List. The Commission approved the release of US$ 6 million of its US$ 200 million budget to compensate Arab settlers in Kirkuk returning to their original homes in other parts of the country.

B. Other key political developments

14. On 28 July, the Prime Minister issued an order to replace Basra Governor Muhammad al-Waeli, a senior member of the Fadhila Party. The order was in response to a letter from the Chairman of the Basra Governorate Council and 27 Council members notifying the Prime Minister of their vote of no confidence in the Governor. The Fadhila Party and the Governor rejected the order and have raised a challenge in the federal Supreme Court.

15. On 27 August, at the height of an annual religious pilgrimage, heavy intra-Shiite fighting in Karbala resulted in the death of more than 50 people. A Government investigation is currently reviewing the incident, which reportedly involved members of the Sadrist Mahdi Army and the local police forces in the governorate controlled by the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council. Following the fighting in Karbala, Moqtada al-Sadr ordered the Mahdi Army to suspend military activities for six months starting 29 August.

16. On 13 September, Sheikh Abu Risha, who had played a role in establishing the Anbar Salvation Council to oppose Al-Qaida, was assassinated outside his home in Ramadi. Abu Risha's forces have been fighting alongside the multinational force and have worked to suppress a significant amount of insurgent activity in the province. Additional tribal leaders in Salah Ad Din, Wasit, Ninawa and now Al Kut provinces are establishing similar Salvation Councils in their respective areas.

C. Regional developments pertaining to Iraq

17. On 22 September, I hosted a meeting of the participants of the expanded neighbours meetings to discuss support for the implementation of the new United Nations mandate in Iraq under resolution 1770 (2007), and progress made with the implementation of the International Compact with Iraq. The meeting strongly supported United Nations involvement in advancing inclusive political dialogue in Iraq and emphasized the need to enhance regional cooperation for a more stable Iraq.

18. On 9 September, the Government of Iraq hosted an expert-level preparatory meeting for the next expanded meeting of Iraq's neighbouring countries, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey. Twenty-one delegations participated in the meeting to review the results of the three working groups established at the previous expanded neighbours meeting held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May. The meeting also discussed the establishment of a follow-up mechanism for the expanded meeting of Iraq's neighbouring countries. This matter is likely to be tabled at the next expanded meeting of Iraq's neighbours in Turkey.

19. The first energy working group met in Istanbul on 28 and 29 June and provided the basis for discussions on investment in Iraq's energy sector while allowing Iraq to outline infrastructure needs. The working group on refugees met on 26 July in Amman and considered ways to ease the burden on Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic in particular. Participants agreed to establish working groups in key sectors (including health, education and economic impact and protection) under a tripartite arrangement, whereby the United Nations would act as moderator in discussions between refugee-hosting Governments and Iraq. The working group on security met in Damascus on 8 and 9 August and outlined cooperation in the exchange of security and intelligence information, developing enhanced communication at the borders and preventing the incitement of violence.

20. On 20 August, the Prime Minister visited the Syrian Arab Republic for the first time since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in November 2006. The wide-ranging talks focused on economic relations, especially through expanded oil and gas pipeline links. Both sides pledged increased expert-level contacts to invigorate existing commitments on security cooperation and on assistance to Iraqi refugees.

21. The Prime Minister visited Turkey on 7 August and finalized a framework for cooperation between Turkey and Iraq aimed at preventing and stopping terrorism and organized crime. On 28 September, the Ministers of Interior of Iraq and Turkey signed an agreement intended to improve border security. On 8 August, the Prime Minister visited the Islamic Republic of Iran, where he held talks on bilateral and regional issues.

22. A new round of direct talks between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran on Iraqi security issues was hosted by Iraq in Baghdad on 24 July. Against the backdrop of continued disagreements over such issues as the detention of Iranian nationals, the meeting was an attempt to establish a tripartite security commission.

23. From 10 to 12 July, a high-level Iraqi delegation led by National Security Adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie visited Saudi Arabia. The delegation met with King

Abdullah, the Crown Prince and the Foreign and Interior Ministers. This was the most senior Iraqi official visit to Saudi Arabia since the Arab summit in Riyadh in March.

D. International Compact with Iraq

24. After the Sharm el-Sheikh endorsement of the International Compact with Iraq, I hosted a meeting in New York on 20 July to consider the mid-year progress report. The report cited significant achievement in many sectors despite the difficult security situation. Public financial management was improving steadily, with better budget planning and execution, elimination of market-distorting subsidies and anti-corruption measures.

25. During the reporting period, the Compact secretariat was established as an agency of the Government of Iraq operating with support from the United Nations, the World Bank and the international community, and its terms of reference were adopted by the Compact Executive Committee, which will oversee its activities along with a Steering Committee. Thematic working groups have been formed and are led by Iraqi senior advisers. Administrative and technical assistance has been provided to the secretariat of the Compact on an interim basis from the United Nations, the World Bank and other development partners and a six-month workplan is being prepared to streamline the activities of the International Compact with Iraq and facilitate its implementation.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission

A. Political activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

26. My Special Representative, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, has maintained contacts with political, religious and tribal leaders to encourage an inclusive political process to bolster security improvements in security. He continued to support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to engage with regional actors and the wider international community. UNAMI worked with the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs ahead of the three working groups established at Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 May.

27. As part of the Executive Committee of the International Compact with Iraq, my Special Representative briefed the diplomatic corps on the launch of Iraq's mid-year progress report. He attended a meeting with members of the donor committee of the International Reconstruction Funding Facility for Iraq, jointly chaired by the Governments of Iraq and Italy. On 9 September he participated in the second Baghdad expert-level meeting of the neighbouring States of Iraq, in preparation for the ministerial-level meeting to be held in Istanbul in early November.

28. The Special Representative paid close attention to developments relating to the implementation of Article 140 and visited the Kurdistan region on two occasions, from 10 to 12 July and from 16 to 18 September, to consult with senior officials of the Kurdistan regional government. During his visit to Arbil in July he attended a seminar on federalism sponsored by a non-governmental organization. On

17 September, he visited the Sinjar area in Nineveh to review the impact of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance to the Yezidi community following a major bombing incident in August and to reaffirm the importance of minorities in Iraq's social fabric.

B. Constitutional support activities

29. The initial draft report submitted to Parliament by the Constitutional Review Committee on 23 May met opposition due to several politically contentious issues, including the powers of the presidency, the authority of the federal Government and the implementation of Article 140 on disputed territories. The Council of Representatives subsequently extended the timeline for submission of the Committee's final report three times — most recently until the end of December 2007.

30. During the summer recess of the Council of Representatives, my Special Representative met with Iraqi political leaders to discuss the constitutional review process and to express the continued support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. He stressed the importance of the linkage between the constitutional review and critical pieces of legislation, including the hydrocarbon package, the draft Law on Governorates which are not part of a region and the draft De-Baathification Law. During the reporting period the Council of Representatives formally asked the Constitutional Review Committee to begin work on drafting legislation mandated by the Constitution. The Committee in turn has requested UNAMI to provide assistance in this regard. UNAMI will continue to provide technical expertise based on international best practices for this purpose.

C. Electoral assistance activities

31. The UNAMI electoral team continues to work with the Independent High Electoral Commission to ensure it attains a state of preparedness for future electoral events. A new Board of Commission, comprised of nine commissioners, was appointed by the Council of Representatives on 8 May 2007. The Election Commission of India hosted orientation training for the Board members in New Delhi. This event brought together international electoral experts and members of the Board to discuss important electoral issues in Iraq and to develop priorities for the future.

32. Upon their return to Iraq, the Board members continued to work closely with UNAMI on a comprehensive capacity-building programme. This programme, funded through the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, has been developed in conjunction with UNAMI, its partners (United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Office for Project Services) and the Electoral Commission. Work to implement 18 identified priority activities has included holding workshops for both the Board and its administration on strategic and operational planning, voter registration and other technical areas. Offers to host training and observation activities by the election commissions of the Republic of Korea and Australia are welcomed. These are scheduled to coincide with national elections in these countries.

33. Building on the role played in observing the selection process of the Board of Commission, UNAMI was invited to observe the selection of the directors of 19 Governorate Electoral Offices. UNAMI will issue an observation report on this selection process, and considers the appointment of the directors a fundamental step in moving the Electoral Commission to a state of operational readiness. Without this field structure the Electoral Commission will be unable to conduct any national election event or voter registration exercise.

34. Voter registration is seen by UNAMI as a key step in holding credible and accepted elections in Iraq. UNAMI is advising the Electoral Commission on steps necessary to convert the recently acquired Public Distribution System database into an accurate voter registry.

35. Considerable challenges remain in preparing for future electoral events in Iraq. Little movement has been observed in the Council of Representatives on the passing of key legislation needed for the implementation of voter registration or other election activities. UNAMI remains ready to advise on the legislative, administrative and executive decisions necessary to move this process forward. Consultations continue with Iraqi stakeholders on such fundamental issues as the election system and how to accommodate internally displaced persons in election activities. UNAMI will also continue to work with the Electoral Commission to advise it on the preparation of an operational budget.

D. Human rights activities

36. Ongoing violence in Iraq continues to pose human rights challenges to the Government of Iraq in its efforts to bring under control acts of violence motivated by terrorism, sectarian considerations and criminal activity. Iraqi law enforcement personnel are under relentless attack by insurgent groups and both Sunni and Shiite armed groups have carried out systematic and widespread attacks against civilians through suicide bombings, abductions and extrajudicial executions, making no distinction between civilians and combatants. The violence has affected all of Iraq's ethnic groups and communities, including minority groups. Scores of civilians were reportedly killed during military operations of the multinational force against insurgents or militias. On 16 September, Blackwater contractors were involved in an exchange of fire that resulted in the death of several civilians. This incident has prompted calls for a tighter regulation of the activities of private security companies and an end of their immunity from prosecution in Iraq.

37. In the context of intensified security operations in Iraq, I remain concerned about the need to ensure that detainees are provided with adequate procedural protections and judicial oversight, sufficient holding and processing mechanisms, and that law enforcement personnel suspected of serious human rights violations are brought to justice.

38. Thousands of internally displaced persons live in dire conditions without access to adequate food supplies and basic services. Children remain particularly vulnerable. While Government officials publicly pledged to devote financial resources to address the most urgent needs faced by the displaced communities, the measures adopted remained inadequate given the gravity of the situation. Many Iraqis continue to seek ways to leave the country, an increasingly risky and

challenging exercise in the face of both deteriorating security and increasing restrictions on entry into neighbouring countries.

39. On 11 October, UNAMI released its eleventh human rights report. Responses received from Iraqi and officials of the multinational force in the preparation of the report underscore the important role of constructive dialogue in addressing the issues that concern us all. The increased cooperation by Government of Iraq ministries with UNAMI human rights officers with regard to access to official data and to detention facilities to report on conditions and due process concerns, and the extension of an invitation to the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment to visit Iraq are examples of such positive developments. The authorities of the Kurdistan regional government continue to grant similar access to detention facilities for UNAMI human rights officers. The appointment of a high-level ministerial committee to examine human rights cases in the Kurdish region is also an encouraging development.

E. Reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance

40. The humanitarian situation in Iraq has worsened during the reporting period. The estimated number of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons rose to 4.2 million, with monthly displacement rates climbing to over 60,000 persons (compared with 50,000 persons six months earlier). While most security incidents occurred in the centre and south of the country, displaced persons are not confined to those regions. There are currently more than 780,000 displaced Iraqis in the north, over 650,000 in the centre of the country and 790,000 in the south. Many are in makeshift camps inaccessible to aid workers due to security concerns. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the worsening security situation has seriously harmed primary health-care and other essential services and put millions of children at increased risk of infectious diseases and malnutrition. UNICEF statistics show that a little over one third of Iraq's 4.8 million children under the age of five have access to safe drinking water. Reports also indicate that school closures and absenteeism due to insecurity are increasing.

41. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reintroduced visa requirements for Iraqis effective 1 October 2007. Numbers crossing from Iraq into the Syrian Arab Republic decreased from more than 2,000 per day to less than 100 a day in early October. Reports suggest that it will take Iraqi nationals two weeks to obtain a visa from the Syrian Embassy in Baghdad. Such restrictions for Iraqis seeking safety across international borders may further strain the capacity of regions and governorates still receiving internally displaced persons.

42. In an effort to increase the provision of protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as support to communities hosting these groups, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) updated and increased its activities under its January 2007 supplementary appeal and doubled the budget to $123 million. Similarly, UNHCR and UNICEF launched a $129 million joint appeal to ensure that Iraqi refugee children have access to education. A joint appeal to address the urgent health needs of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries was issued on 18 September 2007 by the United Nations Population Fund, UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the

World Health Organization (WHO) for almost $85 million. The appeal is coordinated by WHO and funds will be channelled through national health authorities, Red Crescent Societies and non-governmental organizations. The Government of Iraq has recently reiterated its commitment to assist neighbouring countries hosting Iraqi refugees, although specific proposals on the distribution of the $25 million pledged are currently under preparation.

43. On 9 July, UNAMI expressed concerns to the Government of Iraq over the plight of internally displaced persons and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration has established a coordination structure in Baghdad on displacement issues involving United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to address information-sharing issues, the identification of humanitarian needs and assistance gaps, and the facilitation of a timely, effective and coordinated humanitarian response by all concerned actors. The Humanitarian Coordinator's office will provide secretariat and coordination support to the Ministry in cooperation with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. UNAMI has also offered to support the creation of a coordination cell within the Prime Minister's office to bolster the Government's capacity to address broader humanitarian issues.

44. On 29 and 30 July, WHO convened a regional ministerial consultation in Damascus to address the health needs of the Iraqi refugees. Participants agreed to a common framework targeting priority areas such as equal access to health services, enhanced coordination, conducting surveillance on the health situation and disseminating information, providing immunization and other key preventive health services, and addressing malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. It was also agreed that the United Nations should play a key role in supporting host Governments to coordinate activities in the health sector. Participants advised against the establishment of parallel systems to meet health needs.

45. The bombings of 14 August in Sinjar in northern Iraq left over 430 persons dead and more than 500 wounded and destroyed or damaged approximately 500 homes. Together with federal and regional authorities, as well as other international organizations and non-governmental organizations, UNAMI sought to strengthen the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the victims of this heinous attack.

46. The United Nations and its operational partners continued to face increasing challenges. The provision of basic services has been compromised by insecurity, population movements, "brain drain" and an incremental breakdown of public service infrastructure and systems. Serious problems with water quality and sewage treatment are being blamed for an outbreak of cholera in the Kurdish region on 26 August. More than 16,000 cases of diarrhoea and 10 deaths have been registered. The outbreak has since spread to Arbil, resulting in an additional 3,000 cases. Of the reported cases, 30 per cent included children under the age of five. The United Nations country team is working closely with authorities of the Kurdistan regional government on addressing the situation.

IV. International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq

47. As of 31 August 2007, the total contributions to the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund, one of the two funds of the International

Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq equalled $1.257 billion. A total of 160 projects valued at $1.063 billion were approved as of the end of August 2007 for funding under the Trust Fund. Continuing the significant progress in implementation, contracts worth cumulatively $780 million (73 per cent of approved funding) have been entered into and $670 million (63 per cent of approved funding) have been disbursed. Monthly financial updates are made available on the Facility's website (www.irffi.org).

48. At the invitation of the Government of Italy, the sixth meeting of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq Donor Committee will take place in Bari, Italy, on 28 and 29 October 2007. At the Bari meeting, the United Nations and the World Bank will present the progress reports of their respective Iraq trust funds, highlighting the activities, challenges, lessons learned and results achieved during the six-month reporting period.

49. In July 2007, the Co-Chairs of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (the Governments of Italy and Iraq) met in Baghdad with the United Nations-World Bank International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq Coordination Committee to examine the draft report of the independent consultants who had reviewed the terms of reference of the Facility mandated by the Donor Committee at its fifth meeting in Istanbul in March 2007. The sixth meeting of the Donor Committee in Bari will consider the final recommendations emerging from the review of the terms of reference of the Facility with the aim of ensuring stronger Iraq ownership and leadership of the Facility's financed activities, and a clear alignment of the Facility with the International Compact with Iraq and the National Development Strategy.

V. Security and operational issues

A. Assessment of the security situation

50. The security situation in Iraq continues to severely limit the daily activities of the United Nations. During the reporting period, the multinational force and the Iraqi Security Forces mounted large-scale military operations in all areas of Baghdad, in Al Anbar Province in the western region and in Diyala, Wasit, Tamim and Salah Ad Din provinces. The cumulative effect of those operations appears to be a reduction in the level of significant acts of violence in the areas.

51. The level of indirect fire against the International Zone in Baghdad remained constant through June, July and August before falling to the lowest levels encountered for the calendar year in September. There were 16 attacks within the International Zone in June, 13 attacks in July and 9 attacks in August. On 3 and 4 September, there were two attacks in the space of 48 hours. During the incidents of indirect fire, some United Nations facilities were hit by incoming projectiles, causing damage but fortunately no casualties. The risk-mitigating measures will continue to be assessed and measures to better protect accommodations at United Nations facilities are ongoing. All staff members are now provided with accommodation that has reinforced overhead protection.

52. At Baghdad International Airport, Camp Victory was twice targeted by 240-mm rocket fire within a three-week span in September. The first attack caused

one death and several injuries and the second attack caused no casualties or damage. UNAMI is working with the multinational force to determine if this recent use of 240-mm projectiles represents the beginning of a trend or just isolated incidents.

53. National staff members continue to encounter serious security-related problems. Numerous staff members have been forced to relocate their families out of Baghdad to more benign areas in Iraq as well as to neighbouring countries to escape the sectarian and insurgent violence within their respective neighbourhoods. A small number of staff has received direct threats against their personal safety. These threats are being investigated by the Mission's Safety and Security Unit and staff members are provided assistance wherever possible.

54. There has been a marked decline in civilian casualties and unclaimed bodies in Baghdad during the reporting period. The multinational force and the Iraqi Security Forces operations have been instrumental in reducing the number of mass-casualty incidents by imposing increasing measures to interdict the movement of weapon systems and explosive devices. The majority of recent attacks have been carried out by smaller improvised explosive devices and small-arms fire, mainly directed against the multinational force and the Iraqi Security Forces troops or rival factional groups. Suicide and vehicle bomb attacks occur at a reduced level.

55. Outside Baghdad, the violence is focused in the Mosul and Kirkuk areas. Kirkuk is experiencing intra-factional violence as the deadline for a referendum on the status of Kirkuk approaches. Mosul is now second only to Baghdad in the number of violent attacks and, on several recent occasions, has recorded more daily attacks than Baghdad. On 14 August, in a devastating attack on the Yazidi community in Sinjar, in the far north-west of the country, three vehicle-borne bombs caused hundreds of casualties in what was the worst recorded mass-casualty incident in Iraq since the invasion of 2003.

56. The security situation within the Kurdistan region remains relatively stable. As a result, United Nations staff members are able to deploy in order to meet and interact with their Iraqi counterparts on a regular basis. The Inter-Agency Assessment Mission carried out a security assessment from 13 to 20 July and made a number of recommendations, many of which are already in place. In early September the UNAMI security team enabled WHO to launch an emergency response team to Sulaymaniyah to address a major cholera outbreak in the area.

57. In the south, the multinational force moved out of its headquarters at Basra Palace, handing the facility over to the Iraqi Security Forces in August. There are now no multinational forces based within the city limits. All multinational force personnel have been relocated to Basra Air Station. This significantly reduced reporting on security issues from Basra is affecting the United Nations operational capability in that area for the time being.

B. Facilities, logistics and support

58. Overhead protection for the Mission's interim accommodation facility has been completed and will provide for additional staff to be deployed to Baghdad when required. The construction of the integrated United Nations headquarters in Baghdad remains the only viable option for the continued presence of United Nations staff in Baghdad due to the high level of security risk. This approach has

been endorsed in principle by the Security Council and is now subject to approval of funds. While undertaking all available steps to increase self-sustainability in Iraq, UNAMI intends to continue to employ support services under the Logistics Civilian Augmentation Programme (LOGCAP) and the related 607 Agreement in cases when there is no equivalent service provider.

59. The trust fund established in 2004 to support the "Distinct Entity" that provides protection for the United Nations in accordance with Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) will be exhausted by the end of November 2007. Since its establishment, the trust fund has received over $23 million in contributions from 17 Member States. I call upon Members States urgently to contribute to the trust fund in order to allow for the continuation of security arrangements for the United Nations presence in Iraq and enhanced United Nations activities mandated under resolution 1770 (2007).

60. UNAMI has recently dispatched a team to explore the possibility of deploying staff to a new location in Basra, following the redeployment of the multinational force from the Basra Palace compound to the Basra Air Station. Additionally, assessments are under way regarding potential expansion of the United Nations operations in Arbil, covering the north of Iraq.

61. The Mission remains reliant upon the United States, Japanese and United Kingdom air forces to meet its air transportation needs. The United Nations values this support while noting that the use of Coalition air transportation can be complex and, at times, limits the flexibility of movement desired by the Mission and its staff. The Department of Safety and Security of the United Nations Secretariat requires that aircraft used to transport United Nations personnel in Iraq be equipped with adequate self-defence systems. Following the repatriation of Denmark's dedicated aircraft, attempts to identify a troop-contributing country prepared to supply a similarly equipped military aircraft have not been successful. UNAMI and the Department of Field Support are exploring commercial options although suitable aircraft are not readily identifiable in the commercial market. Jointly, the Department of Field Support and the Mission are actively engaged in identifying and collaborating with potential operators and their national aviation authorities to develop and authorize the use of a commercial aircraft with the capabilities required by UNAMI. While the efforts aimed at larger self-reliance in the air support continue, I strongly urge Member States to support United Nations requests for the provision of a dedicated aircraft in the interim.

C. Agreements

62. Negotiations between UNAMI and the multinational force on the conclusion of a set of legally non-binding subordinate arrangements to the 2005 agreement between the United Nations and the United States on the provision of security and medical support to UNAMI are near completion. Drafts are currently being vetted by the multinational force in order to verify whether any further changes are required. UNAMI will continue to work closely with the legal team of the multinational force in order to finalize the work.

63. The status-of-mission agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq was signed in June 2005. Article XII of the agreement stipulates that it shall enter into force on the date of exchange of notes between the parties

confirming the approval of the agreement by their respective competent authorities. Although the United Nations submitted its note in 2005, the Government of Iraq has not yet completed the ratification process and has not delivered the note. Despite numerous follow-up meetings, the current status of the agreement remains unchanged. I will continue my efforts to have the ratification process completed, as the agreement represents a basic legal document for the unimpeded work of the Mission.

VI. Observations

64. The people and the Government of Iraq continue to confront major challenges resulting from the devastating effects of violence. Attacks continue to target civilian populations and high-profile members of the Government. Widespread insecurity continues to make national dialogue challenging and increasing levels of displacement add to an already alarming humanitarian crisis. In the face of these challenges, Iraqi leaders must act responsibly and not succumb to the vicious cycle of hatred and revenge that threatens the future of Iraq. Political compromise and genuine attempts to work across ethnic, sectarian, and political lines are needed now more than ever. The Iraqi people and the international community have high expectations for the Government and they expect bold steps intended to provide a basis for peace and stability in the country.

65. There is now an opportunity that should not be missed. September witnessed the lowest number of Iraqi casualties for the year. The decrease in violence resulting from the ceasefire by the Mahdi Army and the Sunni insurgent allegiance against Al-Qaida holds significant political potential as well. The political challenge for the months ahead will be to transform these military-political developments into a basis for national reconciliation. This is primarily the responsibility of Iraqis and the United Nations stands ready to assist them to that end.

66. I welcome the new mandate given to the United Nations under resolution 1770 (2007) as it increases United Nations assistance in the promotion of stability in Iraq. In particular, the mandate expands the role of the United Nations in advancing national dialogue and reconciliation, and calls for specific action in promoting the constructive engagement of neighbouring countries. Additionally, the United Nations role in coordinating and providing humanitarian, as well as reconstruction and development assistance, especially through the International Compact with Iraq, is underscored in the resolution. The high-level meeting I co-hosted with Prime Minister al-Maliki on 22 September reinforced support for the United Nations role in these important areas. The United Nations will also continue its strong role in providing electoral and constitutional support to the Government of Iraq and promoting the protection of human rights, among other items.

67. In consultation with the Government of Iraq, the United Nations is vigorously planning practical and immediate steps aimed at implementing the new Security Council resolution. UNAMI will further expand those and other activities upon the arrival of my new Special Representative. In support of the enhanced role, I have also strengthened the United Nations team in Iraq by increasing the staff ceiling in Baghdad and Arbil. I am also considering ways to improve outreach to the provinces, including the re-establishment of a small United Nations presence in Basra.

68. The United Nations maintains several distinct comparative advantages in fostering national dialogue in Iraq. The United Nations enjoys good relations with a wide range of actors from across the political spectrum, the Organization's only agenda is the one publicly declared in its mandate, and the United Nations draws upon a wide range of best practices gained from operating in conflicts from across the globe. We will continue to provide technical expertise and best practice knowledge to Iraqi leaders, and we are prepared to do more in this regard in an effort to advance an inclusive political dialogue in the resolution of internal boundaries issues. We stand ready to assist in the successful completion of the constitutional review and in drafting key constitutionally mandated legislation. The United Nations must be afforded the necessary political space and support to operate meaningfully with all parties concerned, and the ability of the United Nations to talk with all sides must be protected and respected.

69. The constructive engagement of Iraq's neighbouring countries, and those in the region, remain vital for the stability of Iraq. Iraq alone cannot overcome the challenges mounted against it and it is in the interest of all its neighbours to stop the deterioration of the situation in the country. Regional cooperation must reinforce the efforts made by leaders inside the country and avoid exacerbating tensions. While there are competing views and interests held by Iraq's neighbours, the regional dialogue among Iraq's neighbours and other key international actors begun at Sharm el-Sheikh holds significant promise. The United Nations has offered to support a mechanism to ensure adequate follow-up on the expanded meetings of Iraq's neighbours and the working groups they have produced. I hope that the next expanded meeting of Iraq's neighbours, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in early November 2007 will address this matter in a constructive manner.

70. The number of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons remains a matter of serious concern. While I commend the neighbouring host countries for extending a helping hand to so many Iraqis in need, particularly Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, their capacities are now strained to extreme levels. It remains a vital task for the Government of Iraq and the international community to ensure that adequate assistance is mobilized and delivered to those in need. However, this situation can only be addressed by changing the security situation inside Iraq and creating the conditions for the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons. The most vital aspect of this would be through launching comprehensive and inclusive political dialogue.

71. For the United Nations to meet the demanding tasks outlined in the new mandate we would have to continue to rely on Member States for support. The proper political support, security arrangements and financial and logistical backing would be essential for the success of the United Nations Mission in Iraq. I am grateful to those Member States that have provided protection and logistical support to the United Nations presence in Iraq, including those providing air support and troops for the Distinct Entity, which operates under the command of the multinational force with a dedicated mission to provide security for UNAMI. I urge Member States to provide the necessary financial and logistical resources for the Mission, including for the Distinct Entity and dedicated air assets, and the required security arrangements, such as through the provision of military advisers and the approval of funding for the new integrated United Nations facility in Baghdad.

72. I wish to take this opportunity to thank my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, who has been working untiringly in Iraq for more than three years. His integrity and his dedication to the people of Iraq have generated respect in Iraq and in the international community. He has made a lasting impact on Iraq and I am pleased that he has accepted my request to continue his service to the United Nations as my new Special Representative for the Sudan. In November, my new Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, will arrive in Baghdad. He is an experienced and committed leader who will provide valuable direction during this new phase of United Nations involvement in Iraq under resolution 1770 (2007).